

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re PATENT APPLICATION of

HIMES, Steven

Appln. No.: 09/725,080

Filed: November 29, 2000

Group Art Unit: Unassigned

Examiner: Unassigned

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FOR: LOYALTY LINK METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR INTEGRATING CUSTOMER
INFORMATION WITH DEALER MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

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PETITION TO MAKE SPECIAL UNDER 37 CFR §1.102(d)

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January 24, 2001

Hon. Commissioner of Patents
and Trademarks
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

Applicants hereby petition pursuant to MPEP §708.02(VIII) to make the above-identified
U.S. patent application special.

If it is determined that the pending claims are not directed to a single invention,
Applicants will make an election without traverse as required under MPEP §708.02(VIII)(b).

Applicants submit that a pre-examination search has been made by a professional
searcher in the following Classes:

Class 701, subclass 30,

Class 364, subclasses 468.15, 468.17, and 479.06,

Class 340, subclass 933, and

Class 705, subclass 27.

Enclosed herewith are copies of the following references which are presently, from among those of record, the most closely related to the subject matter encompassed by the claims.

<u>U.S. PATENT NO.</u>	<u>INVENTOR(S)</u>
5,072,380	Randleman et al.
5,058,044	Stewart et al.
4,159,531	McGrath et al.
6,041,310	Green et al.
5,931,878	Chapin, Jr. et al.
5,657,233	Cherrington et al.
5,557,268	Hughes et al.
5,499,181	Smith et al.

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DETAILED DISCUSSION OF THE REFERENCES

5,072,380

This teaches a system and method for identifying a vehicle in a prescribed area of a service station and associating services with the vehicle. Each vehicle includes a transponder. Communication between the transponder and the service stations is via radio frequency signals.

5,058,044

This patent teaches a system for automatically identifying vehicles, assimilating data from an identified vehicle, correlating the data with predetermined data and providing a statement of account indicative of a transaction involving the vehicle. The system also provides a service record of the vehicle for use in connection with the transaction. For example, in a car rental environment, the service report is utilized by an attendant to determine if such service items as refilling the fuel tank are necessary. Primarily, data for the service record is provided by sensors located on-board the vehicle. The sensor data may be supplemented by data inputted via a keyboard located on-board the vehicle.

4,159,531

This teaches a solid state unit which is intended as an aid in the maintenance and upkeep of a motor vehicle, and which serves as a reminder of the next maintenance mileage point, and the items to be serviced at the next maintenance operation. The unit also serves as a permanent record of the scheduled maintenance that has been performed on the vehicle throughout its lifetime. The unit is intended to be mounted under the dashboard, or at any other convenient location within the vehicle. The unit includes a programmable read-only memory (PROM) in which data is permanently stored representing the mileage at which the next maintenance operations are to be performed, as well as data identifying the items requiring servicing at the next maintenance point. The unit also includes an appropriate display, and solid state logic circuitry which, when activated, causes the mileage at which the next scheduled maintenance is to be performed, as well as the items to be serviced at the next scheduled maintenance point, to

be displayed. In addition, the unit may be conditioned to display the last maintenance mileage point, and the items actually serviced at the last maintenance operation. In a preferred embodiment of the invention, the memory also stores as a permanent record data relating to all previous actually performed maintenance operations, and the mileage points at which such operations were performed. In addition, data relating to the identity of the dealer who serviced the vehicle at each maintenance point may be stored in the memory; as well as data relating to the original dealer, the make, model and year, and the serial number of the vehicle.

6,041,310

This teaches a method and system for facilitating a transaction between a customer and an automobile dealership. The system includes a kiosk including an input/display terminal and a terminal processor for formulating a multilevel customer query of automobile inventory. The query searches a storage device containing automobile data and images to return a selected inventory to the input/display device. The practice of the invention includes storing customer data, selected inventory information for later access by a marketing follow-up application and a financing and insurance application.

5,931,878

This teaches a computerized prompting system especially useful for vehicular maintenance and includes a level of maintenance database with task schedules for selected vehicles and prompt frequencies for those tasks. A prompter initiates a display informing the user that a scheduled maintenance is due to be performed on a selected date and an Internet

exchange connects the database to a service center. The system has a capability to print coupons and to receive and incorporate updates from manufacturers.

5,657,233

This teaches an integrated highly automated vehicle analysis system employing a technician terminal for displaying a plurality of inspection screens, and for entering inspection results. The technician terminal generates an inspection report after the inspection results have been input. A point-of-sale terminal is used to generate a cost estimate report in response to the generation of the inspection report and also generates an invoice report. The system includes a plurality of databases, including an inspection guideline database, a specifications database (containing vehicle specifications), a customer/inspection database (containing prior inspection records), and a parts catalog database (containing part numbers and part costs).

5,557,268

This teaches a system and method for identifying a vehicle for the purpose of displaying diagnostic information to the driver. Each vehicle includes a transponder that transmits an encoded character sequence that is unique to that vehicle. In this way vehicle diagnostic measurements made at the establishment entrance can be associated with the vehicle, and displayed to the customer when the vehicle is recognized again at a service area.

5,499,181

This teaches methods and apparatus for communicating with an occupant of a vehicle. A

method includes the steps of coupling the vehicle to a station; transferring information from the station into the vehicle; and receiving the transferred information and storing the transferred information within the vehicle. In this embodiment of the invention the station is located at a site that provides a service for the vehicle, and the transferred information includes a portion that indicates when a next service is due for the vehicle. The transferred information may include a date that a next service is due and/or a distance that the vehicle is to travel before the next service is due. In this embodiment the vehicle automatically compares a current date and/or an odometer reading to the stored information; and presents a message within the vehicle in human perceptible form when equality is indicated. The information transferred into the vehicle may also include at least executable program instruction and an associated memory address for storage of the at least one instruction.

THE PRESENT APPLICATION

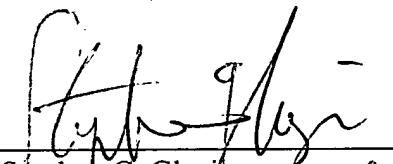
The present application, however, describes a customer data capture system integrated with a dealership data management system that allows customer and vehicle maintenance data to be exchanged between a kiosk on the floor of the dealership and the data management system. The customer inserts a customized card into a kiosk, and interacts with the pre-programmed software on the kiosk. The software recommends scheduled maintenance services and suggests potential coupon savings, based on the information received from the customer's card and the information stored in the data management system. A service order is generated and routed to the service department. As a result, the accuracy and speed of entering customer data are enhanced, while the dealership is able to offer value-added services at the point of sale, thus enhancing the dealership's business relationship with the customer.

Application of STEVEN G. HIMES
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Therefore, the present application claims subject matter that is not anticipated or suggested by, and is patentable in light of, the foregoing references.

Granting of this Petition to Make Special and expedited examination of the claims in the present application are earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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